Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

By Sam Gorman (Sane & Able)

Page 1

I've always been drawn to opposites.

Maybe it's growing up in a world full of contrast—light and dark, noise and silence, sane and insane. Or maybe it's just human nature. We like to split things. Hot or cold. Safe or dangerous. Mine or yours. Even before we understand language, we understand difference.

At the heart of Binary Zoom Theory is a simple idea: the way we perceive the world is through a sequence of binary decisions. Yes or no. Is it moving or still? Is it near or far? Is it me or not me?

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

This isn't just philosophy—it's biology. Our brains rely on neurons firing or not firing. Zero or one. Every sensory experience we have is filtered through thousands—maybe millions—of tiny yes/no switches that shape what we think we're seeing. But the trick is: it doesn't stop at just one layer.

That's where the zoom comes in.

Let's say you're looking at a ceramic tile. That first instant—your brain asks: "Is it a thing?" Yes. "Is it shiny?" Yes. "Is it alive?" No. "Is it dangerous?" No. "Is it familiar?" Maybe.

And on and on.

These are binary questions, layered on top of each other. The more you look, the more detail emerges. The more you zoom in, the more binary distinctions you uncover. And eventually, you get a complete image—not just of the tile, but of your relationship to it.

This stacking of binaries builds a spectrum, yes. But the key is understanding that the spectrum is made of binaries. Like a digital image made of pixels. Or a maze made of turns.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

Computers are built on binary code. Every pixel you're looking at right now is the result of billions of ones and zeros firing in sequence. And yet, to us, it doesn't feel binary—it feels fluid, moving, alive.

Binary Zoom Theory says human perception works in a similar way. We're constantly flipping switches in the background, but the outcome feels smooth and continuous. We don't see 0 and 1—we see a face. A forest. A threat. A home.

But understanding the switches helps us question our assumptions. It helps us see how we got from the raw data to the meaning we've attached to it.

When I make a piece—whether it's a word maze, a ceramic tag, or an installation with lights and sound—I'm not just throwing things together. I'm making a system of decisions. I'm asking: what gets seen, and what doesn't? What's smooth and what's sharp? What's clean and what's corrupted?

Every mark is a binary.

Put them together—and the meaning starts to emerge.

But zoom in, and you'll see it's all made from a series of yes/no choices.

This chapter is about learning to recognise that.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

Chapter 2: The Zoom Function

If Chapter 1 was about recognising how the world is made of binary choices, this one is about what happens when you layer them. This is where the theory earns its second word: zoom.

Because the magic isn't in the binaries alone—it's in how they build.

Every time you look at something, your brain starts making decisions. Not just one, but a cascade.

Is it moving? Yes.
Is it fast? No.
Is it coming toward me? Yes.
Is it a threat? No.

You don't stop at the first answer—you zoom. Each decision adds clarity. That's what perception is—a stack of binary filters, one after another, refining the image.

I call that zooming in: going deeper into the binary tree of perception.

You can also zoom out: stack those decisions into categories, then systems, then narratives.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

Take this example:
You see a mark on a wall.
You decide it's paint.
You decide it's intentional.
You decide it's a name.
You decide it's illegal.
You decide it's art.

Each zoom level recontextualises the previous one. A kid's tag becomes a social statement. A smear becomes a signal. Meaning arrives through layered distinction.

That's Binary Zoom Theory in motion.

People often get stuck on the word "binary." They think it's reductive. Limiting. Like you're trying to flatten the world into yes/no boxes.

But zoom changes everything. It says: sure, the world might be built on twos—but those twos are stacked. They're recursive. Self-repeating. Infinite in combination.

Like zooming into a fractal. Every time you get closer, you find more layers—each made of simple opposites, yet endlessly complex in form.

Binary Zoom Theory doesn't simplify the world—it gives you a framework to navigate its complexity.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

I often think of the structure of perception like two things:
- A maze, where every turn is a binary choice
- A decision tree, where every branch splits into two

In my artwork, especially the maze-like line drawings with hidden words, this structure becomes visible. Every path is deliberate. Every line forks. You can follow one route and get "beauty." Another, and you get "fracture." But they're built from the same logic. The difference is in the sequence—the zoom order.

Even the word placement becomes a kind of zoom map: the outer level might say "create," and deeper in, "correct," "contradict," or "collapse." You don't get to those words without zooming.

It's the same in perception. You don't get to "meaning" unless you take the turns.

Binary Zoom Theory says all meaning is made this way. Whether it's looking at a painting, forming a political opinion, or just deciding what something "is," you're walking a path of binary choices.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

Imagine a dot.

Zoom in:
- It's a pixel.
- It's part of a curve.
- It's part of a letter.
- It's in a word.
- The word is "observe."
- The word is part of a poem.
- The poem is on a protest banner.
- The banner is hanging in a window.
- The window is in your hometown.

Now zoom out again.

Each level adds context—new binaries, new questions:
- Pixel or noise?
- Art or message?
- Inside or outside?

Binary Zoom Theory says all meaning is made this way. Whether it's looking at a painting, forming a political opinion, or just deciding what something "is," you're walking a path of binary choices.

Zooming doesn't just explain how we see. It reveals how we construct meaning—by stacking decisions, walking mazes, forking paths.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

In my own work:

- In my **tiles**, you choose whether to see them as art or graffiti, permanent or temporary, valuable or disposable.
- In the **double slit print**, you're faced with the decision: wave or particle, illusion or reality, observed or observer.
- In the **sound piece**, the whispered “Turn it off” collapses each layer of certainty. What are you turning off? The sound? The thought? The system?

Zooming doesn’t just explain how we see. It reveals how we construct meaning—by stacking decisions, walking mazes, forking paths.

Every binary choice is part of a larger structure. Every perception is a zoomed-in moment. And the more you practice zooming, the more flexible your thinking becomes.

You stop asking, “Is this right?” and start asking, “What fork am I on?”

That’s Binary Zoom Theory in motion.

Next, we’ll explore what happens when people mistake binaries for being overly simplistic—and how to hold both duality and nuance in a single hand.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

Chapter 3: Binary vs Spectrum – Not Either/Or

One of the first things people say when they hear about Binary Zoom Theory is:
“But the world isn’t binary.”

And they're right. It’s not. It’s messy and emotional and contradictory and full of nuance.

But here’s the trick: Binary Zoom Theory doesn’t deny the spectrum—it explains how it’s built.

Think of it like this: a spectrum is a line. A line is made of points. Each point is a yes/no. You don’t see the binary when you’re looking at the whole picture—but it’s there, underneath, structuring it.

This chapter is about correcting the misunderstanding. It’s not either binary or spectrum. It’s both. But one builds the other.

You don’t need to throw away binary thinking to embrace nuance. You just need to zoom far enough that the black and white melt into grey.

It’s like pixels on a screen: zoom in and it's just red or blue. Zoom out and you see a sunset.

Binary Zoom Theory says: the grey is made of black and white. And knowing that helps you understand how perception is constructed—not to simplify, but to reveal the layers underneath.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

Let's say you look at someone's face and decide they're happy. That's not one big intuitive leap—it's made of micro decisions.

- Are they smiling? Yes.
- Are their eyes squinting? Yes.
- Are their shoulders relaxed? Yes.
- Is the situation pleasant? Yes.
- Is this genuine? Probably.

All of these are binary filters. You pass through them in milliseconds. But if even one flips—eyes not squinting, shoulders tense—you might not call it happiness anymore. It's ambiguity. Complexity. The spectrum.

But that complexity only exists because you're stacking binaries into something richer.

The spectrum is where the meaning emerges. But binaries are what generate the spectrum in the first place.

It's like tension in a rope. The opposites are what give it structure. You can't have a stretch without a pull in both directions.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

In my work, I use opposites as tools, not limits.
- Clean vs messy
- Designed vs accidental
- Order vs chaos
- Graffiti vs gallery

I'm not interested in picking sides. I'm interested in what happens between them.

The spectrum is where the meaning emerges. But binaries are what generate the spectrum in the first place.

When you try to binary complex emotions—grief, love, shame—you'll often find that they refuse to split. That's okay.

BZT doesn't say every binary will resolve cleanly. Sometimes, zooming in reveals paradox. That's part of the theory too. You might find that the categories themselves start to dissolve as you go deeper.

And that's beautiful. That's when you know you've hit the edge of the system.

So this chapter is a reminder:
Don't confuse binaries with reduction. They're not the enemy of complexity—they're the soil it grows in.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

Chapter 4: Reading the World with BZT

You don’t need to be in a gallery to use Binary Zoom Theory.

You’re already using it every day—when you make snap judgments, when you hesitate before speaking, when you walk through a space and decide (without words) how it feels. BZT just gives a name to that process. It makes the invisible visible.

This chapter is about turning the lens back on the world and learning how to zoom with intention.

Let’s say you're holding a spoon.

That’s it. A regular spoon.

Here’s a Binary Zoom read of it:
- Is it metal? Yes.
- Is it yours? Yes.
- Is it clean? Yes.
- Is it old? Yes.
- Is it meaningful? Hmm… maybe.

Already, you're forming a relationship with it. And depending on your zoom level, it could become anything.

At the first layer: a utensil.
Zoom in: a tool for feeding a child.
Zoom further: a family heirloom.
Zoom deeper still: the last thing your nan touched before she passed.

All from one object. And none of it is “wrong.” BZT says each zoom level reveals a layer of meaning—but it’s up to you which ones you walk through.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

Now apply this to a room.

Let’s say you walk into a council building. Your body already knows how to read it:

- Is it quiet? Yes.
- Are people watching me? Maybe.
- Do I feel safe? Not really.
- Do I belong here? Unsure.

You’re scanning binaries, rapidly.

This isn’t about paranoia—it’s how we orient ourselves. And once you see it, you can start to notice what triggers those responses. The lighting. The chairs. The signage. The language on the walls.

You begin to understand that your reaction to a space is built from layers of binary judgments—each one shaping your behaviour before you’ve said a word.

Artists design with this in mind. Institutions often don't.

Binary Zoom Theory turns these fleeting impressions into traceable steps. It helps you navigate complex spaces, emotions, or moments with a map—one that was already inside you.

And the more you practice zooming, the more fluent you become in the language of perception.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

Binary Zoom Theory also applies to interaction.

Take meeting someone new. What's happening?

- Are they taller than me? Yes.
- Smiling? No.
- Friendly tone? Yes.
- Similar background? Hard to say.
- Trustworthy? Still building that answer.

What you get is a map of impressions. It's not definitive, but it's layered.

Understanding this makes you more aware of how you're forming opinions. It helps dismantle bias. If you know your brain is flipping switches in the background, you can pause. Zoom. Reframe.

You start to take ownership of your perception.

Now take it further.

Let's say you're dealing with a social issue: climate change, homelessness, digital privacy. These aren't small things.

But zooming helps you not get overwhelmed.

- Is this my responsibility?
- Can I influence this?
- Am I complicit?
- Am I affected?

Each question narrows the gap between abstraction and action.

Zoom in, and you find the point where you are part of the system. That's where action can begin.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

Everyday Binary Zoom: My Examples

- Watching my kids: are they playing or escaping?
- Looking at a wall: is that a crack or a gesture?
- Listening to the news: is this fact or framing?
- Smoking bud in the pit: am I escaping or exploring? (maybe both)

BZT isn't a doctrine—it's a method of awareness. A way to slow down and walk through the layers of what you're seeing, doing, and feeling.

The more you use it, the more you realise the world isn't fixed. It's layered. Shifting. Alive with choices.

You're already zooming.

And now that you can see it, you can *choose* how far in—or out—you want to go.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

Chapter 5: Your Art as a Map of Binaries

I never sat down to make a theory.

The theory emerged because the patterns were already there—in the work, in the choices, in the tension between instinct and analysis. I didn't invent Binary Zoom Theory. I just noticed it was happening.

This chapter is about laying that out. Showing how BZT is not just a tool for interpreting art, but a map that's already embedded in mine.

Start with the most literal example: the maze-like line drawings.

To most people, they're abstract patterns. Maybe decorative. Maybe cryptic. But if you spend time with them, you'll see it—words embedded in the structure. Not laid on top, but woven into the form itself. The line is doing two things at once: building an image and hiding a message.

Binary.

- Seen / unseen
- Shape / signal
- Chaos / system

Every time a viewer makes a visual decision—"Is that a word?"—they are participating in a Binary Zoom. Their eye is decoding. Their mind is layering. The meaning unfolds only if they choose to zoom.

That's not just aesthetics. It's an invitation to perception.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

Page 17

The tiles started as a way to move graffiti off the wall. Portable. Tactile. Durable. But they quickly became more than that.

Each tile holds a tension:

- Is it graffiti or sculpture?
- Illegal or collectable?
- Personal or anonymous?
- Fixed or nomadic?

Drop one in Berlin, Barcelona, London. Now it's part of three city maps, with no one quite sure what it is. You've zoomed out from the act of tagging to a kind of cultural ambiguity. The object becomes a question.

And that's the point: the object itself holds the binary—not just the content, but the context.

One of my proudest pieces is the installation with clingfilm panels lit from below. Every line in that piece is deliberate—hand-drawn, rule-based, yet maze-like and organic. There's no randomness. Only the illusion of it.

- Movement / stillness
- Digital / analogue
- Light / shadow
- Fragile / durable

The clingfilm moves subtly because of a fan. The lights pulse faintly. Viewers think it's alive. They're not wrong. The system is alive—breathing, reacting, collapsing.

Zoom in and you see marks. Zoom out and you see a message. Binary Zoom Theory makes that transition visible.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

The sound work is probably the most direct application of BZT. You hear an AI voice whispering:

> “Turn it off…”
> “Observe…”
> “A choice collapses the field.”
> “You are the observer.”

These aren’t just poetic lines—they’re instructions. They mirror the structure of quantum perception: the idea that observation creates outcome.

- Passive / active
- Listening / participating
- Static / signal
- Real / constructed

Some listeners are unsettled. Others are amused. But everyone responds. Everyone decodes. That’s Binary Zoom Theory at work in sound. You can't just hear it—you have to choose how to hear it.

By now, it’s almost unconscious. I don’t need to force binaries—they arrive through the act of making:

- Each tool has a limit
- Each material pushes back
- Each mark has a counterpart

BZT gives language to that push and pull. It helps me track what I’m doing. But it also gives viewers a way in. It says: “This isn’t random. This is a map. Follow the forks.”

That’s what this chapter is: a key to the maze.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

Chapter 6: The Material Binary

Every material tells a story. Not just through what it shows, but through what it implies—what it refuses, what it echoes, what it contradicts.

In Binary Zoom Theory, materials are not neutral. They're part of the language. They speak in binaries.

This chapter is about how different mediums carry different meanings, and how those meanings are often defined by oppositions.

One of the most persistent binaries in contemporary art culture is graffiti vs street art. I've thought about it a lot. Lived it. Made work in the gap between them.

- Graffiti is name-based, self-driven, often illegal. It's about presence. Ego. A declaration of I am here.
- Street art, by contrast, is often image-based, audience-facing, more palatable to institutions. It plays with scale, message, accessibility.

Graffiti is private language. Street art is public conversation.

Binary.

But when you zoom in, you see how porous the line really is. My ceramic tiles, for example, are tagged objects, but they're also sculptural interventions. They can be picked up. Sold. Curated.

So which are they? The answer is: both—and neither.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

Page 20

Zoom in: graffiti. Zoom out: artifact.

The binary isn't just in the work—it's in the viewer's frame.

Materials don't just shape form. They shape expectation.

- Clay is earthy, fragile, ancient.
- Canvas is industrialised, stretched, often invisible behind paint.

When you tag with glaze on a fired tile, you're collapsing two worlds:

- Street / studio
- Instant / eternal
- Disposable / permanent

The act of making a graffiti tag permanent—and portable—asks the viewer to confront the value system embedded in material. Who decides what lasts? What gets framed? What ends up in a skip?

My work doesn't just use clay. It asks what clay means in the context of a tag.

That's Binary Zoom in matter.

Most street art is fixed. It clings to location. It becomes part of place.

But my tile work floats. It travels. It can be stolen. Gifted. Lost. That mobility disturbs the viewer's binary instinct. Is this part of the building? Is it meant to be here? Do I take it?

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

It creates a decision tree:

- Is this art?
- Can I touch it?
- Is it meant to be moved?
- Am I a thief or a participant?

The material doesn't just deliver meaning—it invites the viewer into the binary maze.

In your clingfilm lightboxes, that tension flips again.

- Clingfilm: flimsy, transparent, temporary
- Lightboxes: structured, glowing, fixed

You've built an installation that looks fragile but is conceptually solid. A material contradiction. Zoom in: plastic. Zoom out: system. It forces viewers to challenge their binary instincts.

Is this chaos or control?
Is this cheap or sophisticated?
Am I looking at it, or is it watching me?

You've used light, fan movement, and materiality to turn a passive experience into an active negotiation.

Binary.

Marshall McLuhan said "the medium is the message."
Binary Zoom Theory says: the material is the first binary.

It's the surface we judge before we even understand what we're seeing. And as artists, we get to play with that. Disturb it. Collapse it. Zoom through it.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

That’s why this chapter exists: to remind us that materials don’t just hold meaning—they shape the structure of meaning itself.

A material is never just what it is. It’s also what it’s not.
It’s the echo of its opposite.
It’s the binary that started the piece before you made a single mark.

In BZT, form doesn’t follow function. Form follows *fork*. You choose your path, and the material is your companion—or your challenger—along the way.

Whether you’re sculpting clay, tagging a wall, etching light into film, or whispering into static, you’re always working with materials that speak back.

You just have to zoom in enough to hear them.

And zoom out enough to understand what they’re saying.

That’s the Material Binary.

And it’s everywhere.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

Chapter 7: BZT in Art History and Culture

Binary Zoom Theory didn't fall from the sky. It came from walking through the maze of art history, seeing patterns, and asking better questions.

Some artists handed me keys. Others built the walls I had to climb. This chapter is about acknowledging those artists—not to pin them down, but to trace how Binary Zoom Theory helps us understand their work (and mine) in new ways.

Keith Haring's work is binary by design.

- Figure / background
- Line / space
- Symbol / noise
- Childlike / coded

At first glance, it's cartoonish. Playful. But zoom in and you see an entire language of oppositions. Men with television heads. Dogs barking power. Babies radiating energy. It's a lexicon of symbols that only make sense if you understand the tension they're built from.

That's BZT at play.

Haring's lines are never casual. They're clear, deliberate, recursive. They invite the viewer to decode. And like in my own work, there's a tension between immediacy and depth—between the first glance and the deep read.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

Tàpies was a master of contradiction.

- Polished surface / violent mark
- Childlike scrawl / academic reference
- Sacred / profane

His recurring X—which I've quoted in mural work—is the ultimate binary sign. A crossing out. A refusal. A negation. But also an invitation to look again.

In Binary Zoom terms, the X is a break in the sequence. It interrupts the smooth zoom. Forces a pause. A collapse. It's a visual "Turn it off."

We share that instinct: to slow the viewer down. To rupture comfort. To point to the system and then scratch it out.

Basquiat's SAMO tags weren't just graffiti. They were philosophical interventions.

- Word / image
- Personal / political
- Masked / exposed

Zoom into a SAMO phrase, and you get wit, anger, satire. Zoom out, and you get context: a Black artist reclaiming space, language, meaning. The binaries are baked in. He uses the visual structure of graffiti to layer identity, history, trauma.

My work echoes that complexity. I'm not just placing words—I'm building frameworks that challenge the viewer's decoding habits.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

What looks like “random linework” is actually a constructed perception path. Like Basquiat, I’m guiding and glitching the read.

The clash between Banksy and Robbo is a classic binary narrative:

- Respect / disrespect
- Street-level / institutionally embraced
- Art / vandalism

Zoom in, and it’s about surface: one tag painted over another. Zoom out, and it’s a conversation about authorship, audience, power.

Binary Zoom Theory maps the incident as a layered meaning system. You see not just the act, but the surrounding binaries that shape it: who decides what art is? Who owns space? Who gets canonised?

My ceramic tiles sit in the same arena. They don’t beg for approval. They exist as contradictions—gallery-worthy graffiti. Collectable illegalities. I’ve turned the Banksy/Robbo binary into a material question.

Stuart Hall’s audience theory (1973) proposes that every message has three potential readings:
- Dominant (intended meaning)
- Negotiated (partial agreement)
- Oppositional (subverted meaning)

Binary Zoom Theory fits right into this. Each zoom level becomes a reading path. You can accept, reject, or remix meaning based on your position in the maze.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

My work thrives in the negotiated zone. It's not forcing a singular reading—it's laying out paths and letting the viewer choose their zoom.

I'm not delivering meaning. I'm building the architecture for others to walk through it.

Binary Zoom Theory gives me the language to describe what I already felt: that art doesn't tell people what to think—it creates space for thinking.

It frames opposites as invitations. It makes contradiction navigable.

And in the end, that's what every great artist I've mentioned here has done. They built their own systems—rooted in tension, sharpened by contrast, made alive by zooming attention.

Binary Zoom Theory doesn't flatten their legacy. It honours the logic underneath it.

We now move from culture to cognition—from canvas to cortex.

Let's zoom in on the mind.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

Your brain is zooming all the time—stacking binaries to form complex perceptions. And just like with art, you don't see the mechanism. You only see the result.

Imagine every moment of consciousness as a path through a decision tree. Like navigating a maze of 0s and 1s.

- Is it light? Yes.
- Is it morning? Yes.
- Am I tired? Yes.
- Should I move? No.
- Do I want to? Maybe.

Each answer shapes the next question. Each choice narrows the path.

That's the zoom function: moving from broad context to sharp perception.

We think we're responding to reality. But in fact, we're selecting it—one binary layer at a time.

There's a famous physics experiment called the double-slit experiment. A particle is fired at a screen. If no one's watching, it behaves like a wave. If someone observes, it collapses into a particle.

Observation changes outcome.

This is the kind of logic Binary Zoom Theory lives for. Because it tells us: meaning depends on zoom. The act of choosing—of distinguishing between options—is what creates reality.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

Your “Double Slit” print is more than a scientific reference. It’s a visual poem about collapse. About the way attention turns waves into structure. About how intention carves form out of potential.

In Binary Zoom, every observation is a choice. And every choice is a collapse.

Now let’s step into digital space.

Every app, website, AI model—even this one—is built from code. And code is binary. Underneath every interaction are switches:

- True / false
- If / else
- On / off

Machines don’t think like humans. But humans build them using the same logic we use to perceive. Our brains are made of switches. So are our machines. The difference is in flexibility—not structure.

You can think of your installation pieces as crossovers between these worlds. Light flickers. Messages loop. Whispers say, “Turn it off.” The viewer becomes both observer and participant.

That’s not just art. That’s a simulation of cognition.

It mirrors the mechanics of thought.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

“A choice collapses the field.”

This phrase appears in my sound work, and it could just as easily be the motto of the entire theory.

Before choice, there’s potential. Every possibility exists. But once you choose, the wave becomes a point. The moment becomes a memory. The thing becomes itself.

That’s the root of Binary Zoom Theory:

Not to flatten the world.
But to trace how we bring it into focus.

By mapping the layers of choice, we begin to understand the shape of our reality—and the structure of our perception.

And that perception is structured like code. Like neurons. Like sound waves. Like poetry. Like a maze. Like light collapsing into form.

From brain to code, from instinct to logic, Binary Zoom Theory shows that beneath all our seeing—there’s a structure.

And it’s built from simple forks.

Each one waiting to be zoomed.

Let’s step into the machine.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

Chapter 9: Binary and the Machine

We live in a binary world.

Not metaphorically—literally. Every photo, sound, swipe, and scroll is built from 1s and 0s. Every interaction you have with a screen is the result of a binary computation. The machine thinks in dualities—even when it speaks in colour and emotion.

Binary Zoom Theory wasn't made to resist this. It was made to understand it.

Because while machines run on binaries, they don't feel them. We do.

This chapter explores how BZT helps us reclaim awareness in a world increasingly shaped by code, algorithms, and automated perception.

You scroll your feed. It feels seamless. Intuitive. Effortless.

But underneath? Millions of tiny switches:

- Show this or that
- Click or ignore
- Store or delete
- Recommend or suppress

Every moment is a binary branch in the machine's logic tree.

The machine doesn't zoom. It filters.

But you? You can zoom. You can ask why. You can trace the stack of decisions that brought you to this moment.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

Page 32

Binary Zoom Theory helps you see what's behind the curtain. It teaches you to ask: What binaries am I walking through right now? Who built them? Who benefits?

In your sound work, a voice whispers:

> "Turn it off."
> "Observe."
> "From static… form emerges."

That tension between noise and clarity—between broadcast and breakdown—is a digital condition. We're flooded with signal, but we're not sure what's worth hearing.

BZT offers a method for separating signal from static.

- Is this useful? Yes.
- Is it true? Maybe.
- Is it meant to manipulate me? Possibly.
- Do I feel more clear—or more lost?

These questions are decoding actions. They turn passive consumption into active interpretation. That's how BZT resists the flattening effect of constant media.

The digital world wants you to forget that you are a participant.

You are not just watching the feed. You are training it.

Every click is a binary signal: yes or no. Like the neurons. Like the slit experiment. Like the maze.

Your attention is the input.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

Binary Zoom reminds you that perception shapes output. Not just artistically—but technologically. If enough people observe something, it becomes trend. If no one watches it, it disappears.

This is where BZT becomes a tool of resistance. It says: “Zoom out. See the system. See your place in it.”

And then decide:
- Stay in the loop?
- Disrupt it?
- Build your own?

You’ve used AI in your practice—not to replace creativity, but to externalise perception. The AI becomes a mirror. A co-thinker. A glitch engine. You feed it ideas, and it feeds you distortions.

That’s not surrender. That’s collaboration. Binary.

- Human / machine
- Input / response
- Author / editor

Your work doesn’t glorify tech. It questions it by using it. That’s BZT in action—zooming through the binary to find the fork, then choosing your own path.

Let’s talk about that phrase:
> “Turn it off.”

It’s not just about the machine. It’s about the loop. The autoplay. The passive scroll. The flattening of perception into preference.

“Turn it off” becomes a call to reclaim the zoom. To reset. To choose again.

Because sometimes, the most powerful binary decision is to stop participating in the system—and build a new one.

That's where the artist comes in.

The next chapter shifts perspective from systems and software to the person navigating them. The one who makes the work. Who holds the compass.

Let's talk about the observer.

Chapter 10: The Artist as Observer

Artists are observers first. Before the brush moves, before the idea forms—there's the looking. The noticing. The quiet, sometimes uncomfortable awareness of what is.

Binary Zoom Theory didn't come from trying to make sense of art. It came from trying to make sense of myself, and seeing how my role as an artist always starts with a single, personal question:

> "What am I seeing?"

This chapter is about the artist as observer. As a switch-flipper. A signal-tuner. A participant in the infinite binary branching of meaning.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

Page 35

I've never been fully convinced by free will.

Not because I don't feel it, but because when I zoom in, I see the causes. I see how one moment leads to another. How environment informs emotion. How habit shapes response. How perception emerges from systems we didn't choose.

- I didn't choose where I was born
- I didn't choose how society labels graffiti
- I didn't choose that light makes shadows

But I can choose to observe. To trace. To ask where each feeling, reaction, or visual impression comes from.

That's the foundation of BZT.

I believe in cause and effect. And as an artist, I use that belief to build systems—not to control, but to reveal. I don't pretend to be outside the world. I zoom in to show how it functions from within.

Art isn't answers. It's architecture. It's a system of openings. Forks. Paths.

When I make a piece, I'm not telling you what to think. I'm asking you to follow the choices. I'm laying out the binary map and saying:

- Left or right?
- See or ignore?
- Touch or retreat?
- Decode or walk past?

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

That's why I embed messages in mazes. Why I work with light, static, and text. I want the viewer to notice themselves noticing. To become the observer. To collapse the meaning into form.

Binary Zoom Theory is built on the idea that the act of looking changes what's seen.

That's not just physics. It's social. Cultural. Emotional.

You observe something, and it starts to shift. You define a space as unsafe—and suddenly it is. You call a piece "art"—and now it holds different value. You say "this is mine"—and ownership emerges.

The observer activates the work.

That's why I don't believe in passive viewing. I make pieces that require time, patience, conflict. Because that's what real perception demands. Not just presence—but participation.

As an artist, I often feel like I'm moving between roles:

- Observer: noticing, collecting, structuring
- Performer: revealing, presenting, embodying

But Binary Zoom Theory reminds me that those roles are binary too. One activates the other.

Sometimes I'm the eye. Sometimes I'm the signal. Sometimes I build the machine—and sometimes I am the machine.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

And that fluidity is the power of being both maker and watcher. You learn to zoom back and forth between intention and reception. You realise that your work only exists when someone chooses to see it.

At the heart of it all, this is the conclusion I've come to:

Meaning isn't fixed. It's built.

And it's built through zooming. Through layering binaries. Through asking better and better questions at each level of observation.

The artist's job isn't to deliver meaning on a plate. It's to give people the tools—and the permission—to zoom.

In the next chapter, we move from solo observation to shared insight—from personal frameworks to community engagement.

Binary Zoom Theory doesn't just belong in studios.

It belongs in classrooms. In workshops. In conversations between artists who haven't yet found the words for what they're doing.

Let's zoom into education.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

Chapter 11: BZT in Education and Engagement

Some ideas want to be kept secret—held close, guarded.
Binary Zoom Theory has never been one of them.

From the very beginning, it felt like a tool meant to be shared. Not because I had the answers, but because I could feel the questions in others—the itch to decode, the hunger for structure beneath the chaos.

This chapter is about passing the lens on. About how BZT becomes not just a personal framework, but a teaching method, a group activity, a way to help others zoom into their own thinking.

During my time at Blackburn, I started noticing that the studio wasn't just a place of making—it was a place of mirroring. Everyone was working, observing, struggling. Everyone was navigating binaries, even if they didn't have a name for it yet.

- Confidence vs doubt
- Process vs product
- Original vs influenced
- Personal vs political

As a peer, a collaborator, and eventually a mentor in some roles, I saw how helpful it was to frame these tensions as layers—not failures. That's where BZT helped: it turned what felt like contradiction into structure.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

Suddenly, “I don’t know what I’m doing” became:
> “I’m at an earlier zoom level—I haven’t made the right distinctions yet.”

And that shift gave people space. It let them breathe. It let them continue.

When I share BZT with others, especially students or emerging artists, I frame it as a challenge:

> “Map your own practice through binaries.”

You’ll find out fast where the tension is. You’ll locate the forks.

Examples I’ve seen others use:
- Spontaneous / structured
- Public / private
- Written / improvised
- Solo / collaborative
- Political / poetic

And then I ask them to zoom in on one.

> “What’s beneath spontaneous?”
> “What’s hiding inside structure?”

That’s where new work often begins. In the zoom. In the decision to choose one branch over another and follow it all the way down.

Teaching like I create means starting with distinctions, not rules. Helping others trace what they’re doing, not just telling them how to do it.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

If a student is stuck, I don't ask "What do you want to say?"
I ask, "What's the first binary you're working with?"

That question alone can unlock entire projects.

Outside of academic spaces, I've also seen BZT spark conversation in community art projects—install builds, public murals, exhibitions. You don't need a degree to feel the effect of a binary contrast. Everyone knows:

- Here / not here
- Seen / ignored
- Welcome / unwelcome

When you give people a chance to map their experience using binary layers, it validates the complexity of their lives. It shows them that nuance doesn't mean vagueness—it means depth.

And in that moment, they're not just participants. They're theorists. They're navigators of meaning.

They're using the compass.

The true gift of Binary Zoom Theory in education is that it makes invisible thought visible. It lays out the map.

- You don't just feel stuck—you see why.
- You don't just choose aesthetics—you understand the layers underneath.
- You don't just create—you zoom through creation.

And maybe, just maybe, you become more than an artist.
You become an observer.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

Chapter 12: Toward a Binary Compass

If Binary Zoom Theory is a map, then the Binary Compass is the hand that holds it.

By now, we've walked through the logic: binary choices build perception, zooming reveals structure, and meaning is made through layered distinction. But what if that wasn't just a theory? What if it could be turned into a tool?

This chapter is about building that tool. A conceptual device. A framework. A Binary Compass—not to tell you where to go, but to help you understand where you are.

A compass doesn't tell you the path. It tells you your orientation. It helps you locate yourself inside a space, even when the landmarks are unfamiliar.

The Binary Compass works the same way.

When you're lost in thought, stuck in a project, unsure how to read something, or overwhelmed by a decision—you can stop and ask:

- What's the binary tension here?
- Which direction am I facing?
- What level of zoom am I at?

That's the compass at work.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

Page 42

Here's how it functions:

1. **Locate the Binary**
Start by naming the fork. This could be about:
- A piece of art
- A personal decision
- A perception of a space
- A philosophical question

Example:
"I'm trying to decide whether my work is for the gallery or for the street."
That's your binary: **Gallery / Street**.

2. **Zoom In**
Now take one branch and explore it.

Ask: what binaries sit underneath it?

Gallery could reveal:
- Commercial / conceptual
- Framed / unframed
- Institutional / rebellious
- Invited / rejected

Street might reveal:
- Anonymous / signed
- Vandal / valid
- Risk / freedom

Now you're building a decision tree—a stack of binaries that lead you deeper into meaning.

3. **Zoom Out**
Ask: what does this binary connect to?

Zooming out from **Gallery/Street**, you might find:

- System vs autonomy
- Stability vs disruption
- Visibility vs invisibility

And now, instead of just choosing one, you understand the field you're in.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

You know where you are—and how layered the choice really is.

That's the Binary Compass. A zooming structure that makes your position legible.

Try this exercise:

1. Draw a central node: your current tension.
2. Branch it left/right: name the binary.
3. Zoom down each branch with at least three sub-binaries.
4. Zoom out by connecting it to wider themes or values.
5. Highlight where you currently stand—and where you might go next.

You now have a personalised perception map.

You're not just moving through life—you're navigating it with structure.

Not every binary resolves. Not every fork leads to clarity.

Sometimes the compass spins.

That's okay. That's part of the system.

If nothing else, the compass reminds you that perception is not fixed. That tension is natural. That you are allowed to be unsure, because you're allowed to be zooming.

The goal isn't certainty. It's awareness.

And now… let's explore the breakdown.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

Chapter 13: When the System Breaks Down

There's a moment in every system where the rules start to bend.
A point where binaries blur.
Where zooming doesn't bring clarity, but noise.
Where the compass spins.

This chapter is about that moment—the collapse, the contradiction, the edge-case where Binary Zoom Theory meets its own limitations… and survives by embracing them.

Because breakdown isn't the opposite of structure.
Breakdown is structure—revealed through rupture.

Let's get one thing straight: if Binary Zoom Theory claims that everything can be layered into neat yes/no paths, then it's already wrong.

The world is too messy for that. People are irrational. Meaning is fluid. Context is everything.

So here's the truth:
BZT only works when you're aware that it doesn't always work.

And that's not a failure—it's a feature.

The breakdown is part of the system.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

In my own work, I've seen this firsthand.

- A maze drawing where the path loops back on itself—no exit.
- A sound piece that becomes overwhelming instead of clarifying.
- A lightbox where the flicker feels more like anxiety than illumination.

These aren't design flaws. They're intentional disruptions—moments where the binary forks lead to contradiction, not conclusion.

In BZT terms, this is the glitch. The loop. The recursive collapse.

You try to zoom in—and end up in a spiral.

That's real. That's human. That's art.

Take any intense feeling: grief, joy, love, rage.
Try to binary it. You'll get stuck.

- Is this good or bad?
- Am I coping or spiralling?
- Do I want to be seen or left alone?

The answer is often: both.

This is where BZT meets its limit—and teaches you to sit with paradox. Not to solve it. To hold it.

You zoom in, and instead of structure, you find blur.
That's the edge of the maze.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

That's the point where you stop navigating and start feeling.

Systems—whether mental, social, or artistic—aren't perfect. They break. They glitch. They contradict themselves.

And when they do, Binary Zoom Theory asks you to notice the moment of collapse. To zoom in on it. To learn from the faultline.

For example:
- When a material fails unexpectedly
- When a viewer reacts in a way you didn't anticipate
- When the meaning shifts after the work is finished

These aren't losses. They're data points.
Moments of collapse = moments of insight.

You learn more from the breakdown than from the success.

Chapter 14: Seeing Through the Theory

There comes a point when you've zoomed enough.

You've mapped the binaries. You've traced the layers. You've collapsed meaning and watched it rebuild. And then—suddenly—you start to see through it all.

This chapter is about that moment. The one where Binary Zoom Theory becomes transparent. Where it stops being a guide and starts becoming part of the background. Not because it failed—but because you no longer need it to see.

Binary Zoom Theory: Seeing in Two Worlds

No system is forever.

Binary Zoom Theory was never meant to be a doctrine. It's a framework. A way in. A means of decoding perception and making meaning visible.

But if you walk the maze long enough, you eventually realise: the maze was just a method. You built it to see something clearly. And now that you see it—you don't need the maze.

You've absorbed it.

You are the compass now.

Art isn't about control. It's about invitation. The artist zooms, maps, and invites the viewer to navigate.

At some point, you stop needing the theory. You just start seeing.

Afterword: A Living Theory

You made it to the end—or maybe you just zoomed here. Either way, welcome.

This book isn't a manifesto. It's a lens. A switchboard. A guide for navigating contradiction, structure, confusion, and clarity. A theory that wants to be outgrown.

Binary Zoom Theory began with a hunch. A pattern. A question I couldn't let go of:

> Why do I see the world the way I do?

I just gave it a name.

So now I hand it to you. Remix it. Map it. Break it. Zoom with it.

Because in the end, this isn't mine.

It's yours now.

—Sam Gorman (Sane & Able)